



ADS Center Teleconference

Combating NIMBYism in Providing Housing to Mental Health Consumers

June 25, 2003



ADS CENTER

Resource Center to Address
Discrimination and Stigma

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE NEED TO BE

- ◆ This teleconference is sponsored by the Resource Center to Address Discrimination and Stigma (ADS Center). The ADS Center is a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services.
- ◆ The ADS Center helps people design, implement and operate programs that reduce discrimination and stigma associated with mental illnesses. The Center's Web site will be launched soon ...



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Part One

“The Roots of NIMBYism and
Strategies to Counter Community
Opposition.”

Presented by: Michael Allen



“Nightmare” Questions the Community Is Likely to Ask



- Property Values
- Drugs/Alcohol
- “Supervision”
- Violence/Crime
- Quality of Life



Dilemmas Facing Housing and Service Providers



- Announce your impending arrival and give opponents time to mobilize against you
- Enter the community quietly and face the charge that community “was not informed”



Legal Rights Analysis



- Federal Fair Housing Act (race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status)
- State fair housing laws
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- State zoning laws
- Local zoning laws



Building Local Support

A Six-Step Process



Step One: Planning



- Organizational capacity, reputation, and experience
- Local government approval process
- Local government familiarity with organization
- Likely concerns/level of opposition
- Legal issues
- Media coverage



Step Two: Political Strategy



- Local government players and policies
- Other “key leaders”—differ community to community
- Identify supporters, opposition, and the undecided
- Coordinate efforts
- Document everything and tell your best story



Step Three: Building Public Support



- Active vocal community support is key
- Develop broad support before contacting opponents
- Don't spend all your time responding to opponents
- Identify and prioritize allies
- Plan recruitment of supporters and what you want them to do for you
- Organize and support your allies
- Keep your allies mobilized



Step Four: Dealing With Community Issues



- Publicity should be designed to discover and address legitimate concerns, not to create an open forum for opposition
- Consider alternatives, e.g., canvassing, rather than open meetings
- Discover basis for opposition before formulating individual responses



Step Five: Legal Strategy



- Identify legal rights and how to spot potential violations
- If illegal discrimination is likely, contact legal assistance immediately



Step Six: Public Relations Strategy



- Decide whether you want to generate publicity (proactive) or respond to coverage (reactive)
- Designate spokespeople, including supporters and former clients
- Develop messages and alternative story formats
- Invite reporters for tours and to meet clients
- Follow up on coverage and develop ongoing relations with media



Part Two

“Overcoming Community Resistance
to Housing for Mental Health
Consumers.”

Presented by: Sister Mary Scullion



Strategies for Gaining Community Acceptance



- Find a location with a permitted use by right under the local zoning code.
- Be proactive in developing allies. Identify people for your Board or Advisory Board who represent the religious, business, civic, and political communities and the consumer movement in the location where you intend to develop the residential site.
- Map out your plan for building community support. Start with allies you can trust and build from there. This plan should include gaining the support of political leaders before the plan becomes public.

Strategies for Gaining Community Acceptance (cont.)

- If you have existing facilities, have potential allies come and meet with the consumers. Have meetings at the facility, hold events and press conferences, and invite political leaders. Relationship with consumers is key in maintaining and building support.
- Develop press contacts and support before any controversy if possible. Try to place success stories in the paper or have them cover current public policy issues around mental health. Be as proactive as you can. Follow the news and know who covers mental health and begin to build a relationship with those reporters.



Strategies for Gaining Community Acceptance (cont.)



- Be prepared to respond to concerns about the impact of the facility on property values.
- Research shows that reducing the number of beds won't significantly increase support; but permit enforcement, a strong track record and good building and program design will.



Designing and Planning Acceptable Housing



- Hire a competent and experienced development team. Your development team has to be able to instill confidence in neighbors and business leaders. They should be names that people recognize or who have stellar references and have done successful projects that neighbors can visit.
- Develop a building that will enhance the quality of life of the residents and of the neighborhood.



Designing and Planning Acceptable Housing (cont.)



- Have sufficient funding and have the funding in place before the project becomes public if possible.
- If possible include amenities that are pleasing to the neighborhood; this will be different in every community. This is something you may want to negotiate as time goes on but include something in your budget for neighbors.



Maintaining Community Acceptance



- Establish an advisory board for neighborhood input and include consumers/residents on it.
- Hold interesting forums, events, movies and shows at the facility that have a broader interest than just your constituency such as art shows, political debates.
- Have a meeting space that the neighborhood can use for their purposes.



Maintaining Community Acceptance (cont.)



- Have neighbors come on site as much as possible.
- Have the staff and residents know the neighbors by name. Host holiday get-togethers, celebrations, etc.
- Realize that this is an on-going effort and every year some effort and evaluation needs to be done in this area.



Part Three

“Legal and Other Resources for
Combating Systemic Housing
Discrimination.”

Presented by: Michael Allen



Building Better Communities Network



- Information clearinghouse and communication forum dedicated to building inclusive communities and to successfully siting affordable housing and community services.
- <http://www.bettercommunities.org/>



Selected Resources Available on BBCN:



- Building Supportive Communities
- Accepting and Rejecting Communities
- The Question of Property Values
- Seeing People Differently: Changing Concepts of Disability and Difference
- Case Studies of Successful and Unsuccessful Siting Strategies

NIMBY Resources (cont.)

- **Corporation for Supportive Housing:**
www.csh.org
- **Fair Housing: The Siting of Group Homes for People with Disabilities and Children**
(National League of Cities, 2000) (Local Officials Guide series)
http://www.bazelon.org/cpfha/1group_homes.pdf

NIMBY Resources (cont.)

- **Group Homes, Local Land Use, and the Fair Housing Act** (Joint Statement of Departments of Justice and Housing and Urban Development, 1999)
- http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/final8_1.htm
- **“Why Not in Our Back Yard?”** 45 Planning Commissioners Journal 4 (Winter 2002)



The NIMBY Report



- Supports inclusive communities by sharing news of the NIMBY syndrome and efforts to overcome it. Published for nearly 10 years by the American Friends Service Committee, it is now published by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in collaboration with the Building Better Communities Network.
- <http://www.nlihc.org/nimby/index.htm>



Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law



- Organization and website dedicated to enforcement of civil and constitutional rights of people with disabilities
- <http://www.bazelon.org>
 - What Fair Housing Means for People with Disabilities
 - Digest of Cases and Other Resources on Fair Housing for People with Disabilities



NIMBY Resources (cont.)



- **No Room for the Inn: A Report on Local Opposition to Housing and Social Services Facilities For Homeless People in 36 United States Cities** (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1995)
- **Building Inclusive Community: Tools to Create Support for Affordable Housing** (HomeBase/The Center for Common Concerns, 1996)



Best Practices



- Portland (Ore.) Office of Neighborhood Involvement
- Alexandria (Va.) Community Services Board
- New Jersey Department of Human Services
- Philadelphia Office of Mental Health